School Climate Data Collection Reporting and Use
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

What is the purpose of a school climate survey?
- Gather more comprehensive and valid data on school conditions
- Focus attention on quality of teacher-student relationships as well as peer relationships
- Identify strengths as well as areas that need improvement
- Measure progress toward school improvement goals

Why does a positive school climate matter?
- Greater engagement in school
- Fewer discipline problems
- Less bullying and teasing
- Less aggression toward teachers
- Better school attendance
- Better academic performance
- Higher graduation rates

Virginia Secondary School Climate Project
- Authoritative School Climate Survey
- All middle & high schools (alternating years)
- All students or randomly selected 25/grade
- Report with school, region, & state norms

Middle School 2013 Survey
Schools – 423 (98.4%)
Teachers – 9,134 (79%)
Students - 43,805 (84.8%)

Dewey G. Cornell, Ph. D., is a forensic clinical psychologist and Professor of Education in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Dr. Cornell is Director of the UVA Youth Violence Project, and a faculty associate of the Institute of Law, Psychiatry, and Public Policy.

Dr. Cornell has conducted research on school climate surveys for nearly 20 years and currently directs a federally funded project that administers the Authoritative School Climate Survey in more than 700 secondary schools in Virginia. He developed the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines, which is an evidence-based protocol for schools to resolve student threats of violence.
High School 2014 Survey

Schools – 323 (99.7%)
Teachers – 13,455 (56.5%)
Students – 48,027 (88.7%)

What is Authoritative School Climate Theory?

Developmental research has found that authoritative parents, who are both demanding and warm with their children, are more effective than authoritarian parents who are demanding but cold and permissive parents who are warm but not demanding.

Our research suggests that schools where discipline is strict but fair, and teachers are perceived as supportive, are more positive learning environments.
**Classic study of parents**

Two contrasting groups
- "Authoritarian" strict discipline-oriented
- "Permissive" lacking in discipline

Source: Baumrind, 1966

**Survey of principals**

Two contrasting groups
- "Get-tough" strict discipline-oriented
- "Be supportive" prevention-oriented

Source: Skiba & Edl, 2004

**Virginia Middle Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Negligent</th>
<th>Permissive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Structure - Strict, but Fair**

- The punishment for breaking school rules is the same for all students
- Students at this school only get punished when they deserve it
- Students are treated fairly regardless of their race or ethnicity
- Students are suspended without good reason (reverse scored)
- The adults at this school are too strict (reverse scored)
- The school rules are fair
- When students are accused of doing something wrong, they get a chance to explain it
- Overall STRUCTURE
School Climate Data Collection Reporting and Use
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

Academic Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My teachers expect me to work hard.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers really want me to learn a lot.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers expect a lot from students.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers do not really care how much I learn (reverse scored).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers expect me to attend college.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support - Care and Willingness to Seek Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most teachers and other adults at this school care about all students</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most teachers and other adults at this school want all students to do well</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most teachers and other adults at this school listen to what students have to say</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most teachers and other adults at this school treat students with respect</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are adults at this school I could talk with if I had a personal problem</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something about it</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable asking my teachers for help with my school work</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is at least one teacher or another adult at this school who really wants me to be more successful</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall SUPPORT

| Overall Support | 4.0 |

Engagement - Affective and Cognitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like this school.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to be a student at this school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I belong at this school.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually finish my homework.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting good grades is very important to me.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to learn as much as I can at school.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Engagement

| Overall Engagement | 3.1 |

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students in this school often are teased about their clothing or physical appearance.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in this school are teased or put down because of their race or ethnicity.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students here get teased or put down about their sexual orientation.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying is a problem at this school.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying | 2.5 |

Authoritative School Climate Survey

1. Structure –
   - Strict but fair school discipline
   - High academic expectations
2. Support – teachers supportive and helpful
3. Engagement – students cognitively and affectively invested in school
4. Prevalence of teasing and bullying (PTB)
5. Personal victimization
6. Aggressive attitudes
7. Character Values
Authoritative School Climate Survey

**Student Demographics**
1. Gender, grade, race/ethnicity, English
2. Years in school and # schools attended
3. Grades last report card
4. School suspensions
5. Educational aspirations
6. Parent education

Authoritative School Climate Survey

**Validity Screening**
51. I am telling the truth on this survey.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
112. How many of the questions on this survey did you answer truthfully?  
   | All of them |
   | All but 1 or 2 of them |
   | Most of them |
   | Some of them |
   | Only a few or none of them |

---

Authoritative School Climate Survey

**Validity Screening**
• Removed 9% in middle and 6% in high school samples
• Reduces exaggerated answers that inflate estimates of risk behaviors
• Improves correspondence with independent criteria and teachers

Authoritative School Climate Survey

How much teasing and bullying do we observe in schools with different levels of structure and support?

IV - 4 groups of schools  
DV - School percentile in Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying

---

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying across 4 Types of School Climate

- Student Reports of Teasing & Bullying

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying across 4 Types of School Climate

- Teacher Reports of Teasing & Bullying
- Student Reports of Teasing & Bullying
Prior study of 9th grade

Schoolwide Passing Rates for Hi-Med-Low PTB:

Student Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algebra I</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Science</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>91.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World History</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools grouped into high-medium-low terciles based on 9th grade student perceptions of bullying and teasing. Passing rates correlate .20 to .31 with PBT.

Virginia High School Safety Study Links Bullying to Test Performance

Bullying and teasing reported by 9th grade students and teachers predicted schoolwide SOL passing rates.

- Algebra I
- Earth Science
- World History
- Biology
- Geometry

Findings controlled for the proportion of minority students in the school, student poverty, or school size.

Virginia High School Safety Study Links Bullying to Dropout Rates

Perceived Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Predicts High School Dropout Rates

- 9th grade student and teacher perceptions of the prevalence of bullying and teasing
- Cumulative dropout rate over 4 years
- Controlled for school demographics and SOL test performance
Bullying and teasing in 9th grade predicted schoolwide graduation rates 4 years later.

Findings controlled for school size, proportion of minority and poor students in the school, community crime, and SOL passing rates.

Bullying and Teasing are the Broken Windows of School Climate

Without order and care, the community deteriorates.

Student Aggression Reported by Teachers

A student said mean or insulting things to me. A student stole my personal property. A student threatened to hurt me. A student physically attacked, pushed, or hit me. A student threatened me with a weapon.

Percentage reporting at least one time

Student Aggression Toward Teachers across 4 Types of School Climate

Authoritative Schools Have Fewer Aggressive Behavior Infractions
I. Positive school climate and prevention

II. High expectations for discipline

III. Equity and improvement

Schools with high structure and high support:

- Lower bullying and teasing
- Teachers report less mistreatment by students
- Lower schoolwide suspension rates

Schools with high structure and high support:

Findings are consistent across schools varying in:
- School size
- Student poverty %
- Minority students %
- Urbanicity

Virginia Secondary School Climate Study

In collaboration:
- Virginia Department of Education
- Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services and Center for School Safety

This project was supported by Grant #2012-JF-FX-0062 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.